

# **NJ Election Law Enforcement Commission- A Historical Timeline**

*By Joseph Donohue, Deputy Director  
(August 20, 2024)*

## **1970s and Before**

October 16, 1964- Governor Richard Hughes enacts New Jersey's first lobbying law (P.L. 1964 c.207). It requires any lobbyist who makes \$500 or more in three months or spends that much to influence legislation to register with the Secretary of State. Trenton attorney John Heher, representing American Mutual Insurance Alliance of Chicago, becomes the state's first registered lobbyist.<sup>1</sup> New Jersey Education Association, historically one of the most powerful lobbyists in the capitol, registers for the first time on December 15, 1964.<sup>2</sup>

September 1, 1970- The interim report of the bipartisan New Jersey Election Law Revision Commission concludes "stringent disclosure requirements on every aspect of political financing must be imposed and enforce at every election level....If there were full public disclosure and publication of all campaign contributions and expenditures during a campaign, the voters themselves could better judge whether a candidate has spent too much." It recommends creation of a 5-member Election Law Enforcement Commission and a tough enforcement strategy: "withhold the issuance of a certificate of election to a candidate who has not complied with the provisions of this act."<sup>3</sup>

November 13, 1971- A new lobbying law (Chapter 183) takes effect, repealing the 1964 act and transferring all jurisdiction to the Attorney General. It requires lobbyists to wear badges in the Statehouse for the first time and file quarterly reports that list the bills they are supporting or opposing.

April 7, 1972- Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 requires disclosure of campaign contributions and expenditures for federal candidates.<sup>4</sup>

June 17, 1972- Break-in occurs at the Democratic National Committee headquarters at the Watergate office complex in Washington, DC. It becomes the focus of a national scandal and intensifies public debate about the need for campaign finance reform.

June 28, 1972- New Jersey Secretary of State Paul J. Sherwin becomes the 131<sup>st</sup> public official indicted for corruption since 1969. Five months later, Sherwin, a Republican, is fined \$2,000 and

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<sup>1</sup> "First Agent to Register as Lobbyist," Trenton Evening Times, October 27, 1964.

<sup>2</sup> "NJEA Now Registered to Lobby," Trenton Evening Times, December 15, 1964.

<sup>3</sup> "Report to the Governor and Legislature," NJ Election Law Revision Commission, September 1, 1970

<sup>4</sup> "The Federal Election Commission- The First 10 Years," Page 1, April 14, 1985.

sentenced to up to two years in prison on charges of bribery and conspiracy to fix a \$600,000 state highway construction contract in return for a \$10,000 to the state party.<sup>5</sup>

June 29, 1972- Former Secretary of State Robert J. Burkhardt, a Democrat, is fined \$5,000 and placed on probation for three years for accepting a bribe to fix a bridge construction contract in 1964.<sup>6</sup>

July 17, 1972- As part of a long quest to win passage of campaign finance reforms, Senator William E. Schluter (R-6A), a member of the Election Law Revision Commission, introduces a revised bill (S-1124) entitled the New Jersey Campaign Contributions and Expenditures Reporting Act. The bill, which becomes law nine months later, creates an independent 4-member Election Law Enforcement Commission to oversee it.<sup>7</sup>

December 14, 1972- Despite months of contentious committee debate, the state Senate votes 31-0 to adopt the reform bill (S-1124).<sup>8</sup>

February 4, 1973- Bergen County Republican Policy Committee becomes the first county party in New Jersey history to adopt contribution disclosure requirements.<sup>9</sup>

February 6, 1973- Senator William E. Schluter testifies before the Assembly Judiciary Committee. "The principle of disclosure...provides the restraints and controls that are necessary for a reasonable and a realistic statute. Excesses will be pared down by the 'glare of the public spotlight.'"<sup>10</sup>

April 16, 1973- State Assembly votes 63-6 to approve reform bill.<sup>11</sup> Unhappy with the bill's passage, colorful, pistol-toting Assemblyman Anthony Imperiale (I-Essex) said it "should be installed on every toilet in the capital to get rid of it."<sup>12</sup>

April 23, 1973- Time magazine article highlights the efforts of U.S. Attorney Herbert J. Stern, whose office alone had indicted 67 officials on corruption charges since 1970. "While New Jersey leads the nation in discovered political corruption, scandal after scandal is emerging in many other areas as the nation conducts what appears to be an unprecedented political housecleaning. Corruption is not necessarily on the rise in the U.S., but the prosecution of it is."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Joseph Sullivan, "So Far, Drive in Jersey has Indicted 131," New York Times, June 29, 1972 and Ronald Sullivan, "Sherwin Sentenced to One to Two Years," New York Times, November 23, 1972.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph Sullivan, "Ex-Aide in Jersey Fined for Bribery," New York Times, June 30, 1972

<sup>7</sup> New Jersey Legislative Index, Legislative history on S-1124.

<sup>8</sup> New Jersey Legislative Index, Legislative history on S-1124.

<sup>9</sup> "GOP Chairman in Bergen to Quit," New York Times, February 5, 1973.

<sup>10</sup> Hearing transcript.

<sup>11</sup> New Jersey Legislative Index, Legislative history on S-1124.

<sup>12</sup> David Hladick, "Cahill OK Due on Bill," The Evening Times, April 17, 1973.

<sup>13</sup> Time Magazine, "Corruption: Busting Public Servants," April 23, 1973.

April 24, 1973- The New Jersey Campaign Contributions and Expenditures Reporting Act (P.L. 1973, c. 83) is signed into law by Governor William T. Cahill, creating the four-member Election Law Enforcement Commission.

May 3, 1973- ELEC's first four commissioners are sworn into office by Governor William T. Cahill.<sup>14</sup> They include Chairman Frank P. Reiche, former Congresswoman Florence P. Dwyer, former Administrative Judge Sidney Goldmann, and Judge Bartholomew A. Sheehan.<sup>15</sup> The Commission schedules its first meeting for May 11, 1973 in the Princeton office of the chairman.<sup>16</sup>

June 10, 1973- Donald G. Herzberg, director of the Eagleton Institute of Politics, predicts that The Act will have a dramatic impact in New Jersey politics. "It's the toughest disclosure law in the United States."<sup>17</sup>

July 23, 1973- The Commission announces the selection of David F. Norcross of Moorestown, special assistant to Governor William T. Cahill, as the first ELEC Executive Director; Edward J. Farrell of Morristown as its first Legal Counsel; and Dr. Herbert E. Alexander of Princeton, a nationally renowned campaign finance expert, as a consultant.<sup>18</sup>

August 8, 1973- ELEC consultant Herbert E. Alexander calls the new law a national model. "In many respects, it's about the best state law in the country...Once the Commission gets operating, it will bring increased levels of confidence to the public."<sup>19</sup>

September 9, 1973- ELEC prepares to move into its new permanent office on the 11<sup>th</sup> floor of 28 West State Street, Trenton.<sup>20</sup>

February 6, 1974- The American Civil Liberties Union and its New Jersey affiliate files a lawsuit *ACLU of New Jersey v. New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission* challenging the constitutionality of The Act.

March 11, 1974- In *New Jersey Chamber of Commerce v. New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission*, the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce and other groups obtain temporary injunction preventing the Commission from implementing lobbying disclosure requirements.

May 6, 1974- The gubernatorial Public Financing program (P.L. 1974, c. 26) is enacted by Governor Brendan T. Byrne, who calls it a "first giant step toward removing the evil of large, private contributions from gubernatorial elections."<sup>21</sup> The law, sponsored by future ELEC Commissioner Albert Burstein (D-37), applies only to general elections and imposes the first

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<sup>14</sup> "Disclosure panel becomes reality as 4 take oath," Star-Ledger, May 4, 1973.

<sup>15</sup> New Jersey Legislative Index, Legislative history on S-1124.

<sup>16</sup> "Campaign Report Due July 24," The Evening Times (Trenton), May 8, 1973.

<sup>17</sup> Ray Warner, "An Expert Looks at State Politics," New York Times, June 10, 1973.

<sup>18</sup> "Cahill Aide to be Campaign Watchdog," Trenton Evening Times, July 24, 1973.

<sup>19</sup> Daniel Hays, "State Campaign Fund Law Called a National Model," Star-Ledger, August 8, 1973.

<sup>20</sup> "State House Briefs," Trenton Evening Times, September 9, 1973.

<sup>21</sup> Jeffrey Brindle, "The 'Guardian Angel' of Campaigns," New Jersey Municipalities, April 1986.

ever contribution limits (\$600 per election in 1977) and spending limits on candidates in exchange for public funding.

April 14, 1975- Members of first Federal Election Commission are sworn into office.<sup>22</sup>

January 13, 1976- Lewis B. Thurston III replaces David Norcross as executive director. Norcross becomes a U.S. Senate candidate, and later would hold several positions with the Republican National Committee, including general counsel.

January 30, 1976- *Buckley v. Valeo*- U.S. Supreme Court upholds contribution limits and disclosure requirements but ends restrictions on campaign spending.

February 29, 1976- Florence P. Dwyer, one of the first four ELEC commissioners, dies at the age of 73.<sup>23</sup>

November 2, 1976- New Jersey voters approve a constitutional amendment allowing casinos to operate in Atlantic City. It ranks as the second most expensive ballot question campaign in state history, costing the equivalent of \$7.5 million in 2024 dollars.<sup>24</sup>

June 7, 1977- Developer Peter L. Levine contributes a net total of \$331,753 to the unsuccessful gubernatorial primary campaign of Representative Robert A. Roe. Levine's contribution is the equivalent of \$1.7 million in 2024 dollars, and is believed to be the largest private contribution to a state candidate in ELEC's history, not counting large contributions by self-financed candidates to their own campaigns.<sup>25</sup>

November 8, 1977- New Jersey becomes the first state in the nation to conduct a gubernatorial general election with public funds. The initial grants to the first two candidates- Governor Brendan T. Byrne and his challenger State Senator Raymond Bateman- total \$2.1 million.

May 16, 1979- ELEC chairman Frank P. Reiche attends final meeting after becoming the only ELEC commissioner nominated to serve on the Federal Election Commission. His FEC term lasts until April 1985.<sup>26</sup> He serves as FEC chairman in 1982.

## 1980s

May 8, 1980- In *New Jersey Chamber of Commerce v. New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission*, the State Supreme Court issues order upholding constitutionality of lobbyist disclosure requirements but narrowing focus of the law.

July 23, 1980- Governor Brendan T. Byrne signs new law (P.L. 1980, c.74) extending Gubernatorial Public Financing Program to primary elections. The prime sponsor was state Senator Charles B. Yates (D-7).

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<sup>22</sup> "The Federal Election Commission- The First 10 Years," Page 2, April 14, 1985.

<sup>23</sup> "Florence Dwyer, 73, Dies; Representative in Jersey," New York Times, March 1, 1976.

<sup>24</sup> Analysis by Deputy Director Joseph Donohue of information from 1976 ELEC Annual Report.

<sup>25</sup> Analysis by Deputy Director Joseph Donohue of original campaign finance reports.

<sup>26</sup> "The Federal Election Commission- The First 10 Years," Page 13, April 14, 1985.

March 16, 1981- In *ACLU of New Jersey v. New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission*, a three-judge District Court upholds constitutionality of lobbyist disclosure requirements.

May 22, 1981- Governor Brendan T. Byrne approves new laws (P.L. 1981, c.150 and c.513) that require lobbyists to file annual financial reports with ELEC while continuing to make lobbyists register with, and file quarterly reports with, the Attorney General's office. The laws, both sponsored by State Senator Eugene J. Bedell (D-12), clarify that expenses of lobbyists would be reportable even if they were not "expressly for" lobbying.

July 22, 1981- Scott A. Weiner attends first meeting as ELEC's newest Executive Director. Lewis B. Thurston III later becomes Chief of Staff to Governor Thomas H. Kean.

June 2, 1981- A record 16 candidates from both parties qualify for public funding in the gubernatorial primary.

January 19, 1982- On his last day in office, Governor Brendan T. Byrne signs more than 150 bills, including one (S-3474) sponsored by State Senator Eugene Bedell (D-12) that substitutes the word "expressly" for "without limitation" in state lobbying law. The subtle amendment sharply reduces the amount of entertainment expenses, gifts, tickets and other items lobbyists must report in relation to their work.<sup>27</sup>

December 21, 1982- Attorney General Irwin Kimmelman and ELEC unveil a report calling for the repeal of the "expressly" loophole and consolidation of lobbying regulation under one state agency.<sup>28</sup>

August 6, 1983- Former judge Sidney Goldmann, one of the first four ELEC members, dies at age 79.

January 17, 1984- Under new law (P. L. 1983, c. 579) enacted by Governor Thomas H. Kean, continuing political committees, commonly called political action committees or simply PACs, must begin reporting their campaign finance activities with the Commission.

July 16, 1984- Frederick M. Herrmann attends first meeting as ELEC's newest Executive Director. Scott A. Weiner later becomes Counsel to Gov. James J. Florio, Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection and Energy, and Chief Executive of the New Jersey Schools Construction Corporation.

September 27, 1985- In *Friends of Governor Tom Kean v. New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission*, the State Supreme Court rules that ELEC lacked the power to charge a gubernatorial candidate with another candidate's truly independent expenditures.

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<sup>27</sup> Dan Weissman, "Just One Little Word in Lobbyist Law Makes Big Difference on Disclosure," Star-Ledger, March 24, 1987.

<sup>28</sup> "The New Jersey Legislative Activities Disclosure Act- Analysis and Recommendations for Amendment," December 1982 and "Lobbying Law Changes Aired," Trenton Times, December 22, 1982.

July 17, 1986- A federal grand jury finds Kenneth Valentine, a former stockbroker for First Jersey Securities Inc., guilty of perjury for claiming he used his own funds when he made a \$1,000 contribution to a U.S. Senate candidate. In fact, Valentine and five other First Jersey brokers were reimbursed by a company official for making contributions to the candidate.<sup>29</sup>

November 17, 1987- David Linett attends his first meeting as an ELEC Commissioner. He leaves in 2000 after more than 12 years of service, making him the longest-serving Commissioner. (added 10/2/17)

September 20, 1988- ELEC approves first White Paper entitled “Contribution Limits and Prohibited Contributions” and authored by Deputy Director Jeffrey M. Brindle. The key recommendation for contribution limits becomes law in 1993.

October 6, 1988- A state grand jury convened by Attorney General W. Cary Edwards says it found evidence that an unnamed company made improper loans to employees who gave maximum contributions to gubernatorial candidates.<sup>30</sup> It recommended several changes to The Act to guard against such abuses, including stricter rules against misuse of loans and more severe penalties for violations. Newspapers identify the company as First Jersey Securities Inc.<sup>31</sup>

## 1990s

January 7, 1990- Lobbyist Karen Kotvas, executive director of Lawyers Encouraging Government and Law, claims top Assembly Democrats pressured her into making a \$20,000 contribution and threatening to block her legislative agenda if she refused- charges the legislators denied.<sup>32</sup> The Attorney General’s office could not verify the accusations.<sup>33</sup> Nonetheless, the uproar over Kotvas’s allegations led to the creation of a nine-member task force entitled the Ad Hoc Commission on Legislative Ethics and Campaign Finance to study potential reforms.<sup>34</sup>

May 16, 1990- ELEC unanimously approves White Paper 5 entitled “Lobbying Reform.” Authored by Deputy Director Jeffrey M. Brindle, it calls for elimination of the “expressly” loophole in the lobbying law, reporting of executive branch lobbying, disclosure of grassroots lobbying and other several other changes that become law in 1993.

October 22, 1990- Ad Hoc Commission on Legislative Ethics and Campaign Finance releases 29 recommendations, including contribution limits for all state and local candidates, creation of

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<sup>29</sup>“Broker Guilty of Perjury on Donation,” The Times, July 18, 1986.

<sup>30</sup> “Presentment of the State Grand Jury Concerning the New Jersey Campaign Contributions and Expenditures Reporting Act,” October 6, 1988.

<sup>31</sup> Wendy Diller, “Trouble on Many Fronts- First Jersey is Under Scrutiny Once Again,” The Record, November 9, 1986.

<sup>32</sup> Chris Mondics and Patrick McGeehan, “Lobbyist Says She was Shaken Down, Accuses Top NJ Democrats,” The Record, January 7, 1990.

<sup>33</sup> Patrick McGeehan and Chris Mondics, “Democrats Escape Lobbyist’s Charges,” The Record, April 5, 1990.

<sup>34</sup> Chris Mondics and Patrick McGeehan, “Trenton Ethics Scrutinized, Study Panel Named,” The Record, March 28, 1990.

legislative leadership committees, restrictions on the use of campaign funds and full disclosure of lobbyist expenditures.<sup>35</sup>

February 25, 1990- Executive Director Frederick M. Herrmann continues a long crusade to eliminate a major gap in the state's lobbying disclosure law. "You couldn't have a worse law than we do. You've got millions of dollars here- where's that money going?"<sup>36</sup>

August 5, 1991- Governor James J. Florio enacts a law (P.L. 1991, c.243) sponsored by Assemblyman George A. Spadoro (D-18) that finally repeals the infamous "expressly" loophole and requires lobbyists to disclose all expenditures they make entertaining legislators and executive branch officials. Another law (P.L. 1991, c.244) sponsored by Assemblyman John A. Villapiano (D-11) makes ELEC solely responsible for enforcing lobbyist disclosure laws.

March 8, 1993- Governor James J. Florio enacts a law (P.L. 1993, c.65) that, for the first time in state history, imposes contribution limits on all state and local candidates in New Jersey. Sponsored by Senate President Donald T. DiFrancesco (R-22) and Assembly Speaker Garabed "Chuck" Haytaian (R-23), the law also allowed the four legislative leaders to establish their own political action committees, set new restrictions on how candidates could use campaign funds, and stiffer fines for violations.

November 10, 1993- In an interview with the Washington Post, Edward Rollins, campaign manager for Governor Christie Todd Whitman, said he spent about \$500,000 in "walking around money" to keep down minority turnout.<sup>37</sup> While Rollins recanted his comments, they led to investigations by the U.S. Attorney's Office, the Attorney General's Office and ELEC. None of those probes found any illegalities but did lead to recommendation to end cash payments on election day.<sup>38</sup> ELEC later imposes an \$8,400 fine on the Democratic State Committee for failing to document its street money outlays in the 1993 campaign.<sup>39</sup>

November 16, 1993- Due to illness, Edward J. Farrell, who gained a national reputation as ELEC's first Counsel, attends last meeting after 20 years of service.

January 7, 1994- Sponsored by Assembly Speaker Garabed "Chuck" Haytaian (R-23), a bill banning the use of cash for "street money" payments and requiring the use of checks is signed into law (P.L. 1993, c.370) by Governor James J. Florio.

March 9, 1994- Edward J. Farrell, ELEC's first counsel, dies at the age of 62.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> "Findings and Recommendations of the Ad Hoc Commission on Legislative Ethics and Campaign Finance," October 22, 1990.

<sup>36</sup> Joseph Donohue, "Larry Lobbyist+Lou Lawmaker = Large Loophole in Disclosure Law," The Press of Atlantic City, February 25, 1990.

<sup>37</sup> Thomas Edsall, "Rollins: GOP Cash Suppressed Black Vote," Washington Post, November 10, 1993.

<sup>38</sup> Robert Rudolph, "Rollins Probe Finds No GOP Payoffs," Star-Ledger, January 13, 1994; Joe Donohue, "ELEC Finds No 'Street Money' Abuse," Star-Ledger, February 16, 1994.

<sup>39</sup> Joe Donohue, "Dems Pay Top Penalty for Campaign Violations," Star-Ledger, August 26, 1995.

<sup>40</sup> "Edward J. Farrell, 62, ex-bar association president" Daily Record, March 10, 1994.

January 17, 1995- James P. Wyse is introduced as the successor to Edward J. Farrell as ELEC's Counsel. He serves nearly as long as his predecessor until he resigns in 2012.

May 17, 1995- A law (P.L. 1995, c.105) establishing procedures for holding recall elections in New Jersey is signed by Governor Christie Todd Whitman. It was sponsored by Assembly Speaker Garabed "Chuck" Haytaian (R-23) and Assemblyman Frank A. LoBiondo (R-1).

May 23, 1995- Former U.S. Attorney Michael Chertoff attends his first meeting as an ELEC commissioner. While he serves just four months, he later becomes the nation's Secretary of Homeland Security on February 15, 2005.

August 15, 1995- Joseph C. Salema, former chief of staff to Governor James J. Florio, agrees to spend six months in a federal halfway house and a period of home confinement after admitting he took \$335,000 in kickbacks to steer a bond deal to a Camden County agency.<sup>41</sup> Publicity over bond-related pay-to-play practices in New Jersey and elsewhere prompted the Securities Exchange Commission to impose national restrictions on contributions made by investment banking firms.<sup>42</sup>

January 10, 1996- Governor Christie Todd Whitman enacts a law (P.L. 1995, c. 391) that requires candidates and committees that report to ELEC include their name and address on any communications they distribute. Chief sponsor is Senator William E. Schluter (R-23).

January 24, 1997- First ELEC website goes live.

October 8, 1997- State Appellate Court concludes that Remington and Vernick circumvented state law by using multiple PACs to provide contributions to candidates and committees. ELEC December 16, 1998 approves \$16,900 fine against the engineering firm.

November 18, 1997- Deputy Director Jeffrey M. Brindle presents White Paper 12 entitled "Repartyization: The Rebirth of County Organizations" to the Commission. The report accurately predicts that the 1989 U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Eu v. San Francisco County Democratic Central Committee*, which allowed party officials to make primary endorsements, coupled with 1993 reform law would lead to a resurgence of county parties in New Jersey.

February 10, 1998- Governor Christie Todd Whitman unveils her proposed Fiscal Year 1998-1999 budget. It includes a special \$1 million appropriation to help ELEC finish modernizing its computer system.

October 6, 1999- Upgrades to ELEC's computer enable the public, for the first time, to search reports filed by candidates on the agency's website.

## 2000s

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<sup>41</sup> Ted Sherman, "Ex-Florio Aide Gets 6 Months for Bond Kickback Scheme," Star-Ledger, August 15, 1995.

<sup>42</sup> Robert Cohen, "SEC Limits Political Giving by Municipal Bond Dealers," Star-Ledger, April 7, 1994.



January 30, 2001- Governor Christine Todd Whitman enacts P.L. 2001, c. 20 which denies eligibility for public funds to gubernatorial candidates who oversaw a 527 or 501(c) nonprofit organization within four years of their candidacies unless candidates file reports with ELEC disclosing contributions and expenditures by such groups.

June 8, 2000- A special investigative panel that includes future ELEC Commissioner Walter F. Timpone, a former Assistant US Attorney, is critical of a \$500 million state motor vehicle inspection contract with Parsons Infrastructure and Technology Group.<sup>43</sup> Parsons and affiliated groups had provided more than \$500,000 in contributions to New Jersey candidates and Committees, according to the State Commission of Investigation.<sup>44</sup> The Parsons project is cited by legislative sponsors as a key impetus behind efforts to enact “pay-to-play” restrictions on public contractors.

November 6, 2001- With five candidates participating in the Gubernatorial Public Finance program, ELEC distributes more than \$22 million in public funds- the most ever in one year.

November 12, 2001- Bartholomew A. Sheehan, one of the first four ELEC commissioners, dies at 93. He became a Jesuit Brother after serving in the state Assembly, as a judge, and as an ELEC commissioner.<sup>45</sup>

March 27, 2002- President George W. Bush enacts the so-called McCain-Feingold law that seeks to eliminate “soft money” contributions to national parties and prohibits use of corporate or union funds for issue-oriented radio and television ads before federal elections.

November 4, 2003- The battle over the fourth legislative district race costs the two state parties more than \$6.1 million. It remains the second most expensive legislative showdown ever in inflation adjusted dollars. The campaign cost more than the 1985 gubernatorial general election.

December 10, 2003- In *McConnell v. FEC*, the U.S. Supreme Court, in a 5-4 vote, upholds key aspects of the McCain-Feingold law.

June 16, 2004- Governor James E. McGreevey enacts 20-bill package of ethics and campaign finance bills, including state’s first pay-to-play restrictions for public contractors (P.L. 1994, c. 19), sponsored by Senate Majority Leader Bernard F. Kenny (D-33) and Assemblywoman Loretta Weinberg (D-37); public disclosure of grassroots lobbying (P.L. 2004,c.20), sponsored by Senator John H. Adler (D-6) and Assemblywoman Linda R. Greenstein (D-14); a reduction from \$400 to \$300 in the threshold for disclosing information about contributors (P.L. 2004, c.28), sponsored by Assemblywoman Joan M. Voss (D-38); registration of professional fundraisers (P.L. 2004, c.29), sponsored by Assemblyman Reed Gusciora (D-15); and expansion of reportable lobbying activities to include efforts to influence the executive branch (P.L. 2004, c.27), sponsored by Assemblyman David R. Mayer (D-4).

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<sup>43</sup> Dunston McNichol, “AG:Officials Covered Up DMV Mess- Report States Supervisors Ignored, Distorted Signs of Inspection Fiasco,” Star-Ledger, June 9, 2000.

<sup>44</sup> Dunston McNichol, “Probe Calls Auto-Testing Deal a Waste- SCI Review Traces Overpayments and Undone Work to Bidding Process,” Star-Ledger, March 14, 2002.

<sup>45</sup> “B.A. Sheehan Sr., Jesuit and former public figure,” Philadelphia Inquirer, November, 14 2001.

June 22, 2004- Federal Election Commission imposes \$508,900 fine on New Jersey developer Charles Kushner for alleged federal campaign finance violations.<sup>46</sup>

June 22, 2004- Ralph V. Martin chairs his final meeting for ELEC, making him the longest serving chairman at eight years and four months. Former Assemblyman Albert Burstein (D-37), co-sponsor of the law that created the Gubernatorial Public Finance program, attends his first meeting as an ELEC commissioner.

August 8, 2004- In a move to test public financing for legislative campaigns, Governor James E. McGreevey enacts “New Jersey Fair and Clean Elections Pilot Project” (P.L. 2004, c.121), sponsored by Assembly Majority Leader Joseph J. Roberts (D-5) and Assemblywoman Linda R. Greenstein (D-14). About \$4.2 million is spent, mostly for grants to candidates, in five legislative districts in 2005 and 2007 but ultimately the program is phased out.

September 22, 2004- Governor James E. McGreevey issues Executive Order 134 closing “fair and open” loophole that let contractors receive state contracts larger than \$17,500 even if the contractors made large contributions to gubernatorial candidates, or state or county parties.

December 15, 2004- Governor Richard J. Codey enacts a new law (P.L. 2004, c.174) that freezes contribution limits that apply to state and county parties and legislative leadership committees.

January 23, 2005- Jerry Fitzgerald English, former commissioner of the state Department of Environmental Protection and one-time chairwoman of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, attends her first meeting as ELEC chairwoman.

January 26, 2005- Governor Richard J. Codey issues Executive Order 18 clarifying that state pay-to-play laws do not apply to contracts financed through the Federal Highway Administration.

March 22, 2005- Governor Richard J. Codey enacts a law (P.L. 2005, c.51) that puts statutory force behind Executive Order 134, which eliminated “fair and open” loophole for state contracts. Sponsored by Assemblywoman Linda R. Greenstein (D-14) and Assemblyman Michael J. Panter (D-12), the law also makes clear that federally financed contracts are exempt from state pay-to-play reforms.

November 8, 2005- With the two major party nominees, Democrat Jon S. Corzine and Republican Douglas R. Forrester, bankrolling their own campaigns and not participating in the Gubernatorial Public Finance program, the campaign for governor costs nearly \$88 million. It is the most expensive state election in history.

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<sup>46</sup> Josh Margolin, “Kushner to Pay Hefty Election Law Fine-\$508,900 to Feds for Improper Donations is Record for State Donors,” Star-Ledger, July 1, 2004 citing Conciliation Agreement in the matter of Charles Kushner and 40 Associated Partnerships, MUR 5279, Federal Election Commission, June 22, 2004.

January 5, 2006- Governor Richard J. Codey enacts a law (P.L. 2005, c.271) that enables local government entities to develop their own pay-to-play laws. Prime sponsors include Assemblywoman Linda R. Greenstein (D-14) and Assemblyman Michael J. Panter (D-12).

February 21, 2006- ELEC approves \$255,000 fine against the Democratic State Committee- its largest fine ever, and the largest ever against a Democratic committee. On August 15, 2006, ELEC approves a \$45,750 fine against the Republican State Committee- the largest ever against a Republican committee.

February 23, 2006- Former ELEC Vice Chairwoman Paula A. Franzese becomes chairwoman of the State Ethics Commission following an appointment by Governor Jon S. Corzine.

January 13, 2008- Governor Jon S. Corzine enacts law (P.L. 2007, c.304) clarifying that pay-to-play disclosure laws do not apply to non-profit groups. It was sponsored by Senators Joseph M. Kyrillos (R-13) and Raymond J. Lesniak (D-20).

January 16, 2008- In *IMO the Appeal by Earle Asphalt Company (A-37-08)*, the state Supreme Court unanimously upholds as constitutional the state's pay-to-play restrictions on public contractors, rebuffing a challenge filed by Earle Asphalt Company.

April 3, 2008- Herbert E. Alexander, a nationally renowned scholar of campaign finance who served as a consultant to the first ELEC Commission, dies at age 80.<sup>47</sup>

September 24, 2008- Governor Jon S. Corzine issues Executive Orders 117, which prohibits large contractor contributions to candidates for Governor or Lieutenant Governor, State Political Party Committees, County Political Party Committees, Legislative Leadership Committees, and Municipal Political Party Committees, and 118, which extends pay-to-play restrictions to redevelopment contracts.

June 16, 2009- The Commission announces the appointment of long-time Deputy Director Jeffrey M. Brindle as its newest Executive Director. Frederick M. Herrmann retires after 25 years of service. During his tenure, he served as President of the Council on Governmental Ethics Laws (COGEL) and President of the Northeastern Regional Conference on Lobbying (NORCOL) and received numerous awards for his efforts to promote ethical government.

June 26, 2009- Governor Jon S. Corzine enacts a new law (P.L. 2009, c.66) sponsored by Assemblywoman Joan M. Quigley (D-32) and Assemblyman Joseph P. Cryan (D-20) that establishes electoral and campaign finance requirements for the new office of Lieutenant Governor. Kimberly A. Guadagno is elected the state's first Lieutenant Governor on November 3, 2009.

November 3, 2009- Independent special interest groups spend \$14 million in the New Jersey's governor's race, reflecting a trend of outside groups playing a bigger role in state, national and even local campaigns.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> "Herbert Alexander, 80, Scholar of Money in Politics," New York Times, April 5, 2008.

November 16, 2009- Executive Director Jeffrey M. Brindle announces that, for the first time, contributions made to local officials can be searched on ELEC's website.

## 2010s

January 19, 2010- ELEC Vice Chairman Peter J. Tober attends his last meeting after accepting an appointment as Assistant Counsel to Governor Christopher J. Christie. On February 1, 2011, he becomes Executive Director of the State Ethics Commission after an appointment by the Governor.

January 20, 2010- Governor Christopher J. Christie issues Executive Order 7 extending the definition of business entity to include labor unions and organizations. In *Communications Workers of America, AFL-CIO v. Christie*, the state Appellate Court on May 7, 2010 vacates the order, insisting legislation is necessary to make that change.<sup>49</sup>

January 21, 2010- The U.S. Supreme Court in *Citizens United v. FEC*, in a 5-4 ruling, strikes down a ban on unlimited independent campaign spending by corporations and unions while upholding contribution limits for candidates.<sup>50</sup> It also declares that lawmakers have broad authority to require independent groups to disclose their campaign finance activities.

March 8, 2010- In *In re Election Law Enforcement Commission Advisory Opinion No. 01-2008*, the New Jersey Supreme Court unanimously upholds ELEC's authority to prohibit candidates from using campaign funds for their defense against criminal charges.

April 22, 2010- ELEC issues a list of seven priority recommendations, including the elimination of the "fair and open" loophole in pay-to-play law, the consolidation of pay-to-play regulations into a single law, detailed disclosure of campaign-related spending by political non-profit groups, disclosure of lobbyists hired by government agencies, wheeling restrictions and disclosure of efforts to lobby local officials.<sup>51</sup>

September 8, 2010- Governor Christopher J. Christie unveils a broad ethics reform package, including an end to the "fair and open" loophole in pay-to-play laws, consolidation of pay-to-play regulation into a single statute, extension of pay-to-play laws to labor unions, and an end to the practice of "wheeling."

November 10, 2010- ELEC announces that it has received the "Best Official New Jersey Web Site" award by the Documents Association of New Jersey.

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<sup>48</sup> "White Paper No. 24- Independents' Day: Seeking Disclosure in a New Era of Unlimited Special Interest Spending, Pages 39 and 40.

<sup>49</sup> Dunstan McNichol, "New Jersey Appeals Court Rejects Christie Ban on Union Campaign Support," Bloomberg News, May 7, 2010.

<sup>50</sup> *Citizens United v. FEC*, 558 U.S. (2010).

<sup>51</sup> ELEC press release

November 15, 2010- Senate State Government, Wagering, Tourism and Historic Preservation Committee approves a bill (S-2379) sponsored by Senators Barbara Buono (D-18) and Loretta Weinberg (D-37) that requires political non-profit groups to disclose their contributions and expenditures if they take part in New Jersey elections.

May 26, 2011- ELEC, in conjunction with the state Attorney General's office, files a civil lawsuit seeking repayment of \$94,004 in campaign funds used to fund criminal defense costs on behalf of Sharpe James, a former Newark Mayor and State Senator.

September 15, 2011- State Comptroller A. Matthew Boxer and ELEC Executive Director Jeffrey M. Brindle hold joint press conference calling for the elimination of the so-called "fair and open" loophole in state pay-to-play laws.

November 13, 2011- Less than a year after he joined the Commission, Lawrence Weiss dies at the age of 79. He had been appointed by Governor Christopher J. Christie in March 2011.

January 17, 2012- Governor Christopher J. Christie enacts a law (P.L. 2011, c.204) sponsored by Senator Raymond J. Lesniak (D-20) that prohibits candidates or office-holders from raising campaign funds on public property and allows ELEC to impose fines of at least \$5,000 for violations.

February 7, 2012- In *Margaret Nordstrom v. William "Hank" Lyon*, the state Appellate Division upholds the authority of ELEC to enforce the state's campaign finance rules.

May 3, 2012- Senator Minority Leader Thomas H. Kean, Jr. (R-21) and Senator Michael J. Doherty (R-23) introduce legislation (S-1917) that imposes the same contribution limits, disclosure requirements and contract conditions on labor unions that most other public contractors face under state pay-to-play laws.

May 21, 2012- Former election officials, including one-time ELEC and FEC Chairman Frank P. Reiche, jointly file an amicus brief urging the Supreme Court to reconsider its ruling in *Citizens United v. FEC*.<sup>52</sup>

June 2012- Senator Samuel D. Thompson (R-12) introduces budget resolution 4357 seeking \$2 million to enable ELEC to upgrade its computer system.

October 18, 2012- State Assembly, in a 49-23-6 vote, approves resolution (AR86) opposing *Citizens United v. FEC* ruling and calls on Congress to amend the U.S. Constitution to reverse it.

March 14, 2013- Assembly State Government Committee approves a bill (A-3863) co-sponsored by Assemblyman Reed Gusciora (D-15) and Assemblywoman Linda Stender (D-22) that adopts ELEC's proposal to require political non-profit groups and Super PACs to disclose contributions and expenditures if they take part in a New Jersey election.

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<sup>52</sup> "Former Election Officials File Amicus Brief in Supreme Court Challenging Citizens United Decision and Calling on Court to Reconsider its Position," Democracy 21, May 21, 2012.

March 26, 2013- Attorney General Jeffrey S. Chiesa announces indictment against Birdsall Services Group and several executives for allegedly circumventing the state's pay-to-play laws.

April 5, 2013- Fund for Jobs, Growth and Security, a Washington-based 527 committee, files a lawsuit against ELEC. Fund organizers want to file as a political committee and disclose both their contributors and expenditures. But they insist that in the wake of *Citizens United v. FEC*, the committee should not have to abide by contribution limits. On April 26, 2013, the United States District Court for the District of New Jersey issues temporary injunction against enforcement of the contribution limits for the Fund. On July 17, 2013, ELEC announced it signed a permanent injunction allowing unlimited fund-raising by the committee.<sup>53</sup>

April 24, 2013- Senator Minority Leader Thomas H. Kean, Jr. (R-21) appoints former ELEC Executive Director Frederick M. Herrmann to the Joint Legislative Committee on Ethical Standards.

April 30, 2013- A bill (S-2748) is introduced by Senators James Beach (D-6) and Linda R. Greenstein (D-14) proposing a sweeping overhaul of campaign finance laws. It would establish a single statewide pay-to-play law; scale back the use of the "fair and open" loophole while still allowing it for state, county and municipal political party committees; expand disclosure requirements for independent groups; require disclosure of all contributions, not just those above \$300; raise contribution limits in accordance with ELEC's Cost Index Report recommendations; and require disclosure of contributions for all vendors with public contracts over \$17,500.

June 13, 2013- Birdsall Services Group agrees to pay \$1 million in penalties, fines and restitution for violating New Jersey's pay-to-play laws. The amount is in addition to \$2.6 million previously paid to settle a civil forfeiture action related to the criminal case.<sup>54</sup>

December 5, 2013- A record \$39 million in independent spending on the 2013 gubernatorial and legislative elections (excluding ballot questions) appears to be the fifth highest ever for any state in America, according to an ELEC analysis. The figure is more than double the \$14.9 million in independent spending during the 2009 governor's race.<sup>55</sup>

June 30, 2014- Governor Christopher J. Christie signs a new state budget that contains a \$2 million special appropriation to enable ELEC to upgrade its computer system. The proposal had bipartisan support, with Senate Majority Leader Loretta Weinberg (D-37), Senator Samuel D. Thompson (R-12), and Assemblyman John F. McKeon (D-27) submitting resolutions seeking the appropriation.

February 19, 2015- Former State Sen. Joseph Coniglio agrees to settle a lawsuit filed by ELEC and the Attorney General's Office over alleged illegal use of campaign funds to pay legal bills.

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<sup>53</sup> [https://www.elec.nj.gov/pdffiles/press\\_releases/pr\\_2013/pr\\_07172013\\_a.pdf](https://www.elec.nj.gov/pdffiles/press_releases/pr_2013/pr_07172013_a.pdf)

<sup>54</sup> Peter Aseltine, "Birdsall Services Group Pleads Guilty to Charges that it Made Illegal Corporate Political Contributions Through Executives to Evade Pay-to-Play Law and Obtain Lucrative Public Contracts," Attorney General Office press release, June 13, 2013.

<sup>55</sup> [https://www.elec.nj.gov/pdffiles/press\\_releases/pr\\_2013/pr\\_12052013\\_1.pdf](https://www.elec.nj.gov/pdffiles/press_releases/pr_2013/pr_12052013_1.pdf)

Coniglio admitted no wrongdoing but agreed to a \$100,000 payment, including a \$30,000 payment to ELEC.

August 16, 2015- After serving valiantly despite a long illness, Commission member Amos C. Saunders dies at the age of 81.<sup>56</sup> His death leaves just two members- Walter F. Timpone and Ronald DeFilippis.

February 16, 2016- ELEC announces that lobbyists in April will be able for the first time to file their quarterly reports electronically.<sup>57</sup> It is one of the enhancements to the computer system enabled by the special appropriation.

April 14, 2016- Assembly Republican Leader Jon M. Bramnick (R-21) introduces legislation (A-3639) incorporating ELEC recommendations that require more disclosure by independent special interest groups, streamline the state's pay-to-play laws and strengthen party committees in part by boosting contribution limits. A two-bill package (A-3902 and A-3903) introduced June 9, 2016 by Assemblyman Troy Singleton (D-7) contains many of the same provisions and increases the chances of bipartisan reform.

April 23, 2016- Howard C. Birdsall, former CEO of Birdsall Services Group, is sentenced to four years in prison for engaging in illegal pay-to-play practices.<sup>58</sup>

May 2, 2016- ELEC Commissioner Walter F. Timpone is sworn in as New Jersey's newest Supreme Court justice after being nominated by Governor Christopher J. Christie. One other previous commissioner, Hayden Proctor, served on the Supreme Court before joining the commission. When Timpone resigns from the commission, it is the first time in agency history that it has just one member- Chairman Ronald DeFilippis.

November 8, 2016- A proposed ballot question that would have let casinos operate outside of Atlantic City suffered overwhelming defeat. It was the most expensive referendum in New Jersey history. Campaign finance reports filed with ELEC showed the ballot measure drew \$24,669,426 in spending.<sup>59</sup>

March 27, 2017- Following the appointment of Eric H. Jaso and Stephen M. Holden to the Commission, the Commission holds its first meeting in a year. When Marguerite T. Simon joins the Commission in July, it is the first time in six years that the body has four members.

May 2017- ELEC unveils a modern, more streamlined website with powerful new tools for accessing and interpreting campaign finance and lobbying information on the site.

July 21, 2017- Ronald DeFilippis resigns from the Commission. Governor Christopher J. Christie names Eric H. Jaso as chairman on July 28.

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<sup>56</sup> <https://obits.nj.com/us/obituaries/starledger/name/amos-saunders-obituary?id=17866181>

<sup>57</sup> [https://www.elec.nj.gov/pdf/press\\_releases/pr\\_2016/pr\\_02162016.pdf](https://www.elec.nj.gov/pdf/press_releases/pr_2016/pr_02162016.pdf)

<sup>58</sup> Kathleen Hopkins "Ex-Birdsall Chief Gets 4 Years for Pay-to-Play Scheme," Asbury Park Press, April 23, 2016.

<sup>59</sup> ELEC Annual Report 2016, Table 1, Page 13. [https://www.elec.nj.gov/pdf/annual\\_reports/annual2016.pdf](https://www.elec.nj.gov/pdf/annual_reports/annual2016.pdf)

July 21, 2017- Governor Christopher J. Christie enacts P.L.2017, c. 177 that saves hundreds of thousands of dollars by replacing the distribution of printed ballot statements of gubernatorial candidates to voters with online posting of the statements in all 21 counties and on the websites of ELEC and NJ Division of Elections.

November 7, 2017- Senate President Stephen M. Sweeney (D-3rd) withstands a multi-million-dollar challenge by the New Jersey Education Association, the state's major teacher union, in what at the time was believed to be the most expensive state legislative race in American history. An estimated total of \$24.1 million was spent on the election by Sweeney, his allies and his opponents.<sup>60</sup>

December 4, 2017- After 44 years at its 28 West State Street office building in Trenton, ELEC begins a move to its new office at 25 South Stockton Street, the former headquarters of New Jersey Network.

August 8, 2018- Former State Senator William E. Schluter, chief sponsor of the legislation that created ELEC in 1973 and a long-time champion of the agency, dies at the age of 90.<sup>61</sup> The Pennington resident served as chairman of the Citizens Clean Elections Commission, which oversaw a pilot public financing program administered by ELEC in the 2000s for legislative candidates. He also served on the State Ethics Commission and Joint Legislative Committee on Ethical Standards. His 296-page book entitled "Soft Corruption: How Unethical Conduct Undermines Good Government and What to do About It" was published in 2017.

December 27, 2018- Albert Burstein, a former Majority Leader of the New Jersey General Assembly and an ELEC commissioner from 2004 to 2010, dies at the age of 96.<sup>62</sup> In 1973, he sponsored legislation that became the nation's first program for publicly financing gubernatorial elections.

January 2019- Parties, political committees and continuing political committees gain the ability to file their forms electronically.

June 19, 2019- Governor Philip D. Murphy signs law (P.L. 2019, c.124) requiring independent groups to publicly disclose their contributions if they engage in New Jersey elections or lobby to support or oppose legislation. The proposal had been unanimously supported in both legislative houses.

June 25, 2019- Americans for Prosperity, a 501c4 social welfare group based in Arlington, Virginia, files a lawsuit in U.S. District Court to block enforcement of the P.L. 2019, c.124, contending that its compelled disclosure, particularly involving lobbying, was unconstitutional and would chill contributions.

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<sup>60</sup> "3rd District Race May Be Most Expensive Legislative Race In Us History; Overall Legislative Independent Spending Soars To New Record", ELEC press release, Table 1, December 1, 2017.

<sup>61</sup> <https://www.blackwellmh.com/obituaries/william-everett-schluter>.

<sup>62</sup> <https://newjerseyglobe.com/fr/albert-burstein-former-assembly-majority-leader-dies-at-96/>.



## 2020s

March 18, 2020- U.S. District Judge Brian Martinotti signs a permanent injunction against enforcement of P.L. 2019, c.124.

March 9, 2021- Lobbying expenditures hit a record \$105 million in 2020 as lawmakers enacted scores of bills to address the COVID-19 crisis, marijuana advocates pushed hard for legalization, and a major health insurer secured legislation letting it reorganize.<sup>63</sup>

April 17, 2021- Frank P. Reiche, ELEC's first chairman dies at the age of 91.<sup>64</sup> After leading ELEC from 1973 to 1979, the Princeton resident won a six-year term on the Federal Election Commission from 1979 to 1985 through an appointment by former President Jimmy Carter. Reiche was FEC chairman in 1982.

March 30, 2023- ELEC Chairman Eric H. Jaso and Commissioners Stephen M. Holden and Marguerite T. Simon, all serving in holdover status, resign.

March 31, 2023- ELEC releases the most comprehensive history of recall elections ever compiled in White Paper 30- "Recall Elections in New Jersey- Citizen Safety Valve of Empty Threat?". The analysis found that nearly 650 elected officials have been targeted for recall since the first state law was enacted in 1911, but just 96 have been directly ousted by voters.<sup>65</sup>

April 3, 2023- Governor Phil Murphy signs a law (P.L. 2023, c.30) that raises non-gubernatorial contribution limits, streamlines pay-to-play restrictions and requires more disclosure for independent groups- all ELEC recommendations.

April 24, 2023- ELEC reaches its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

June 15, 2023- Governor Phil Murphy appoints four new commissioners to ELEC, including Chairman Thomas H. Prol, Ryan Peters, Jon-Henry Barr and Norman Evans. Except for a single meeting in 2017, it is the first time since 2011 that the Commission had a full complement.<sup>66</sup>

October 31, 2023- ELEC Executive Director Jeffrey M. Brindle retires after 14 years in that title and 38 years with the agency.

May 4, 2024- Amanda S. Haines becomes the sixth person and first woman to assume the title of Executive Director following her appointment by the Commission. She was Acting Legal Director before assuming the agency's top post and had worked 19 years at the agency.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> [https://www.elec.nj.gov/pdf/press\\_releases/pr\\_2021/pr\\_03092021.pdf](https://www.elec.nj.gov/pdf/press_releases/pr_2021/pr_03092021.pdf)

<sup>64</sup> <https://www.echovita.com/us/obituaries/nj/princeton/frank-perley-reiche-12622326>.

<sup>65</sup> <https://www.elec.nj.gov/pdf/whitepapers/white30.pdf>.

<sup>66</sup> <https://nj.gov/governor/news/news/562023/approved/20230615a.shtml>.

<sup>67</sup> [https://www.elec.nj.gov/pdf/press\\_releases/pr\\_2024/pr\\_05212024.pdf](https://www.elec.nj.gov/pdf/press_releases/pr_2024/pr_05212024.pdf).